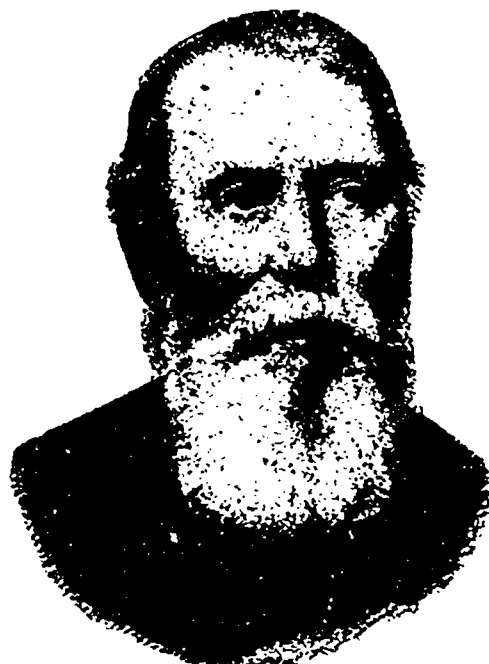




THE RIGHT HON. LORD MASHAM,
The veteran and fearless champion of Fair Trade
in England.

ernment in establishing, April 1897, a preference in favor of British goods of one-quarter of the Customs duties imposed by the tariff was greeted both here and in England as a wise and popular step. As a consequence, the treaties of Great Britain with Belgium and Germany, which precluded any possibility of Imperial preferential trade, have been abrogated. Since August 1, 1898, the way has been clear for the advocacy and practical enactment of such a policy. Who will step into the breach and be its leader?

The Position of the Colonies.

Needless to say, the self-governing colonies would welcome a tariff preference in the English markets. They would willingly grant a corresponding preference in their own tariffs to British goods. Canada has already given a preference without any return. There were rumors after the Jubilee that other colonies would follow suit. They have not yet done so, but the disposition to do so is there. Each British subject in a British colony purchases several dollars' worth more per annum of British goods than a foreigner. Therefore, the future possibilities of Britain's colonial trade are probably greater than her foreign trade. In total amount, of course, the colonial trade is not nearly equal to the foreign trade at present, being, indeed, only 15 per cent. of the whole, but, with the higher tariffs imposed by foreign countries, it is questionable whether the business done with them is very profitable to British manufacturers.

Thus, then, the colonies are in this position. Their populations, man for man, are far better customers of Britain than foreigners; there is the tie of friendliness—which tells in business, there is a willingness to adopt mutual tariff preference, and the hostility of foreign tariffs is daily driving England and her colonies closer together.

It is proper to notice that there are movements in more than one colony which indicate that if the influences which make for closer

British Empire League, the president and most influential member of which is Colonel George T. Denison, advocates preferential trade. Mr. Alex. McNeill, M.P. for North Bruce, has long been the chief Parliamentary leader of the movement, and has delivered many addresses upon it in Canada and in England. The action of the Canadian Gov-

Imperial union are resisted, other influences, which are disintegrating, may begin to operate. It is all very well to say that the colonies are loyal. So they are. But loyalty alone will not sustain a political connection. In South Africa, the Afrikaner Bund has aims which are distinctly not British in view. The policy of a wide reciprocity in Canada, would, if carried out, work against Imperial union. So that the colonial commercial development must proceed along Imperial lines during the next twenty years, or it might easily, and would probably, be drawn into other channels. If a Trade Policy for the Empire is to be evolved out of the conditions that are pressing so heavily upon British commerce, now is the time to start it. Later on may be too late.

The Empire in Conference.

There was a frank interchange of views at the Intercolonial Conference held at Ottawa in June, 1894. On that occasion there were delegates present from Great Britain, Canada, New South Wales, Tasmania, Cape of Good Hope, South Australia, New Zealand, Victoria and Queensland. The following resolution was adopted:

"Whereas: The stability and progress of the British Empire can be best assured by drawing continually closer the bonds that unite the colonies with the Mother Country, and by the continuous growth of a practical sympathy and co-operation in all that pertains to the common welfare,

"And, whereas: This cooperation and unity can in no way be more effectually promoted than by the cultivation and extension of the mutual and profitable interchange of their products;

"Therefore, resolved: That this Conference records its belief in the advisability of a Customs arrangement between Great Britain and her colonies by which trade within the Empire may be placed on a more favorable footing than that which is carried on with foreign countries."

Then came the conference of colonial Prime Ministers with Mr. Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in London during the Jubilee proceedings of June, 1897. The Imperial trade question was taken up in the private discussions held then. Mr. Chamberlain said:

"This is a matter upon which, at the present time, rather than suggest any proposals of my own, I desire to hear the views of the gentlemen present. In the meantime, however, I may say that I note a resolution which appears to have been passed unanimously at the meeting of the Premiers in Hobart, in which the desire was expressed for closer commercial arrangements with the Empire, and I think it was suggested that a Commission of Inquiry should be



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